10546

A

LETTER

FROM A

Miniſter of the Church of ENGLAND

TO A

Gentleman in the COUNTRY:

WITH

INSTRUCTIONS

How to behave himſelf in Sickneſs.

To the Law and to the Teſtimony: if they ſpeak not according to this Word, it is becauſe there is no light in them, Iſa. 8. 20.

If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments, Mat. 19. 17.

The righteouſneſs of the Righteous ſhall not deliver him in the day of his Tranſgreſſion, Ezek. 33. 12.

Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all, Jam. 2. 10.

Wo to the Rebellious Children, ſaith the Lord, that take Counſel but not of me, and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add ſin to ſin. Iſa. 30. 1.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the World, and men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil, John 3. 19.

LONDON: Printed, MDCXCV.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

LETTER

FROM A

Miniſter of the Church of *England*, &c.

SIR,

WHEN not long ſince you was viſited with a Malignant Diſtemper, through your being deſtitute of a fitter Perſon to attend upon you, it fell to my lot to perform this Office: In the diſcharge of which you may poſſibly remember, I was not wanting to direct the uſe and improvement of that Diſpenſation, and throughout the courſe of your illneſs you was treated by me with all the faithfulneſs, openneſs, and freedom, which might be juſtly expected from the Character I ſuſtain, either as your Friend, or as a Miniſter of the Goſpel.

It pleaſes God to renew his Viſitation, and to lay his Hand afreſh upon you, for what end would be great preſumption in me to judge, but it highly concerns you ſeriouſly to conſider, and if it ſhall appear by your engaging in a ſearch of this Nature, that your former Repentance was ſlight and partial, not extended to every thing, which you ought to have bewail'd, and to have humbled your ſelf for before God; then it will be a Matter of abſolute neceſſity ſpeedily to ſupply this defect, and never to reſt ſatisfied, till you experience in your ſelf a Contrition proportion'd to your Guilt; a Contrition, which will not fall ſhort of that godly Sorrow, which *worketh Repentance to Salvation not to be repented of.* 2 Cor. 7. 10.

The moſt exact and effectual method for acquiring this happy diſpoſition is preſcrib'd by that Church into which you have had the priviledge of being baptiz'd : And is as follows,

Exhortation before the Celebration of the Holy Communion.

To examine your Life and Converſattion by the Rule of Gods Commandments, and wherein ſoever you ſhvll perceive your ſelf to hxve offended, either by Will, Word, or Deed, there to bewail your own ſinfullneſs, and to confeſs your ſelf to Almighty God with full purpoſe of amendment of Life ; and if you ſhall perceive your offences to be ſuch, as are not only againſt God, but alſo againſt your Neighbours, then you ſhall reconcile your ſelf nnto them, being ready to make Reſtitution and Satisfaction, according to the utmoſt of your power, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other, and being likewiſe ready to forgive others that have offended you, as you would have Forgiveneſs of your Offences at Gods Hands.

The Law of God applied to our Actions is the onely ſure infallible Rule, by which we can diſcover the Rectitude or Obliquity, the Good or Evil of them, for *Sin is* nothing elſe but *the tranſgreſſion of the Law*, and where that is broken, it is not any favourable circumſtances with which the action may be qualified, as being undertaken with the moſt upright Intention, or directed to the beſt and moſt glorious Ends, that can change the Nature of it.

a 1 *Joh.* 3.4.
b *Joh.* 16.2. *Acts* 26. 9. 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 11, 12.
c *Rom.* 3.8.

The principal Inquiry, when we ſhall be ſummon'd to give an Account of our Actions will be,

a *Whoſoever committeth Sin tranſgreſſeth alſo the Law, for Sin is the Tranſgreſſion of the Law,* 1 Joh. 3 4.. b *They ſhall put you out of the Synagogues: yea the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you will think that he doth God ſervice,* Joh. 16. 2. *I verily thought with my ſelf that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus of Nazareth,* Acts 26. 9. *And for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a Lie: that they all might be damn'd who believ'd not the Truth, but had pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs,* 2 Theſ. 2. 11, 12. c *And not rather as we be ſlanderouſly reported, and as ſome affirm that we ſay, let us do evil, that good may come: whoſe Damnation is juſt,* Rom. 3. 8.

Whether we have kept the Commandments of God? and terrible muſt the Sentence be, if neither Obedience nor Repentance for the want of it can be pleaded in our favour. 2 Cor. 5. 10. Jude 14. 15.

Therefore while you are imployed in your penitential Exerciſes, let me once more beſeech you, as you tender the ſafety of your precious Soul, not to omit examining your ſelf, in that part of your life, which reſpects the preſent Revolution.

Put this ſingle Queſtion home to your Conſcience, Whether a Man, whoſe Allegiance is owing to his Natural and Rightful Sovereign Prince, both by the Laws of God and his Country, and bound faſter upon him by the ſolemn and ſacred Obligation of Oaths, can depart from, and renounce ſuch Allegiance, without offending the God of Righteouſneſs and Truth, who challenges from him the moſt profound Reverence to his Name and Authority?

And if the Anſwer return'd ſhall point you out for the Man concern'd in the Queſtion, charge you with an Act of groſs diſobedience, heightned and aggravated with the guilt of perjury; then ſtand aſtoniſh'd at the Goodneſs of God, and with loweſt Proſtrations adore him for the Methods of his Mercy, with ſhame and ſorrow, with Confeſſion and Holy Purpoſes for the future: humble your ſelf under his afflicting hand, and earneſtly implore God's Pardon and Forgiveneſs for Chriſt's ſake: By his Agony and Bloody Sweat, by his Croſs and Paſſion beg to be delivered in this time of your Tribulation, in the hour of Death and in the Day of Judgment, and ſuffer not that Correction, which is graciouſly deſign'd for your Amendment to conclude in your deſtruction.

The Subjection and Obedience injoyn'd to the Higher Powers is only to ſuch as are legally inveſted Rom. 13.

with

with the Sovereign Authority, and have a right to Govern, and not to thoſe, who have no better Title to the Crown, than an injurious and forcible Poſſeſſion

It is inconſiſtent with the God of Juſtice to command and determin our Obedience to meer Poſſeſſion without and againſt Right; this would be to make him a Patron of Unrighteouſneſs, and act contrary to his ever bleſſed Nature, a peculiar property of which is not to favour and ſupport Uſurpation, but

Pſa. 146. 7. *to execute Judgement for the oppreſſed, and give right to them that ſuffer wrong.*

They who place themſelves in the Throne by force and violence, with expulſion of the juſt Magiſtrate, are charg'd with the Crime of *reſiſting the Or-*

Rom. 13. 2. *dinance of God*, and become liable to the ſevere Puniſhment threatned againſt it, and 'tis a ſtrange conceit to imagine, that the Apoſtle ſhould at once condemn their Act, and pronounce them cloath'd by that very Act with Divine Authority, that the ſame Perſons ſhould at the ſame time, and by the ſame means, be both the Reſiſters, that are ſet in oppoſition to the Ordinance of God and condemned for it, and the Power or Ordinance it ſelf, that is to be obeyed and not reſiſted.

Further yet to leave us without excuſe, and to put it even out of the poſſibility of miſtaking the true Object of our Obedience, St. *Paul* in plain and expreſs terms limits and reſtrains it to ſuch only, as

Rom 13. 7. have a Right to it, *Render to all their Dues, Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Cuſtome to whom Cuſtom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour.*

Our Subjection is a Duty appropriated to him or them, who have a Legal Claim or Right to it, a Debt which cannot be withheld from the Sove-

reign

reign Rightful Prince without manifeſt Injuſtice, and they, who by a furious zeal ſhall be tranſported into Reſiſtance, however they may eſcape at preſent, ſhall be ſure to pay dear for it at laſt: For *they that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation*; and Rebellion will be found to be as miſerable in the Concluſion, as it is impious in the practice.

And can we fondly hope, that the Matter will be mended? Or that we ſhall find relief by doing all this with the ſolemnity of Oaths, which oblige to the Contrary! This is ſuch a Circumſtance, as ſwells the Diſobedience to a prodigious Bulk, and makes the Provocation infinitely more heinous.

The God of Truth exacts from us a ſtrict and punctual performance of our Oaths, and deeply reſents the Violation of our Faith thus ſolemnly given, as we are aſſured by his Prophets,

A lying Tongue is an abomination to the Lord, and corrupted with Perjury grows ſtill more deteſtable: For God declares that he *hates a falſe Oath*: *He will not hold them guiltleſs that take his Name in vain*; but will himſelf be *a ſwift Witneſs againſt falſe Swearers, and come near to them in Judgement*: And it will be much more prudent and happy for us to believe him

a *Rom.* 30. 2. *Joſh.* 9. 19. *Matt.* 5. 33.
b *Joſh.* 9. 20. *Ezek.* 17. 16, 18, 19.
Pro. 6. 16, 17.
Zech. 8. 17.
Exod. 20. 7.
Mal. 3. 5.

a *This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded; if a Man vow a vow unto the Lord, or ſwear an Oath to bind his Soul with a bond; he ſhall not break his word, he ſhall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth*, Num. 30. 1, 2. *We have ſworn unto them by the Lord God of Iſrael: now therefore we may not touch them*, Joſh. 9. 19. *Thou ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf, but ſhall perform unto the Lord thine Oaths*, Matth. 5. 33.

b *This we will do to them; we will even let them live, leſt wrath be upon us, becauſe of the Oath, which we ſware unto them*, Joſh. 9. 20. *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, ſurely in the place where the King dwelleth that made him King, whoſe Oath he deſpiſed, and whoſe Covenant he brake, even with him in the midſt of* Babylon *he ſhall die, ſeeing he deſpiſed the Oath by breaking the Covenant (when lo he had given his hand) and hath done all theſe things, he ſhall not eſcape. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, as I live, ſurely mine Oath that he hath deſpiſed, and my Covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompenſe upon his own head*, Ezek. 17. 16, 18, 19.

upon

upon his Word, than to owe our Conviction to the Execution of his Vengeance.

It seem'd to me improper and unreasonable to exhort you to a Duty without offering Reasons to perswade you of its necessity, and if in this Address I have trespassed upon you, and shall be thought not to express a due regard to your Body in its weak Condition, let my Concern for your Soul, and the Charity of the Motion attone for the Offence, when the real end and design of giving you this little uneasiness, is only to prevent your falling into the danger of insupportable Torments.

Because no Rules and Instructions given at a distance can be so particularly fram'd, as to answer all Occasions and Circumstances, therefore it will be requisite for you to make choice of some honest Spiritual Guide to conduct you by his Counsel, to assist you by his Prayers, and from whose hands you may receive the comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Bloud of Christ, which taken with due preparation will remove the Sting of the first, and destroy the Power of the second Death, and prove a certain infallible Preservative of Body and Soul to everlasting Life; and then you need not be anxiously solicitous about the event of your Sickness, but may have a well grounded Hope, that it will make for your Advantage, whether it concludes in a Recovery, or in your Dissolution; for which you shall not want the constant Prayers of

SIR,

Your true Friend and

London, June 18. 1695. *affectionate humble Servant.*